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THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS

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Good Afternoon Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischman, and Members of the Education Committee,

I am Dr. Karissa Niehoff, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of Schools and the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference. Our association provides professional development for principals, assistant principals and teacher leaders in nearly 1000 Connecticut schools and is the regulating body for interscholastic athletics and student activities.

Our association supports Raised Bill 6835 An Act Concerning English Language Learners. Fundamental to the learning process is understanding. Students for whom English is not the primary language face a tremendous barrier to understanding and these students should be provided greater bilingual support than what is currently defined in state statutes. Lengthening the time during which ELL students are provided language transition and academic support services by qualified ELL instructors are important first steps in enhancing the support offered these students, thereby increasing their potential for academic success.

Regarding Bill 944 An Act Concerning Full-Day Kindergarten, our association strongly supports the intent of the legislation. However, we are concerned that this requirement does not come with necessary funding. For those districts currently not offering full-day kindergarten, significant resources will need to be reallocated. Facilities, staffing, curricular resources and transportation costs will need to be provided. We are concerned that existing programs will be compromised.

Regarding Bill 962 An Act Concerning the Middle School Curriculum, we do not support the required inclusion of instruction regarding a person's rights and responsibilities during a custodial stop. Such a topic should be delivered by a law enforcement expert and is not necessarily appropriate for all students in grades 6-12. The school day is finite and educators are challenged to deliver curricular requirements already defined in state statutes.

Finally, we strongly support Raised Bill 6836 that expedites the criminal background check process for potential employees of local and regional boards of education. As a former high school principal, I have personally experienced occasions when a background check has taken weeks and has ultimately revealed an issue of concern. We had been presented with falsified employment applications and had allowed unqualified adults to be working with students in our educational setting.

Thank-you for considering my testimony.

Karissa L. Niehoff, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Serving schools and
their leaders